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11 March 1980

MEMORANDUM FOR: DCI

FROM : [redacted]
Chief, Iran Task Force

SUBJECT : Suggestion for Administration Statement
on Hostage Situation

Bob Ames, NIO/NESA, drafted most of this note that I think outlines the type of statement that should be released by the administration--perhaps read by Hodding Carter. The basic point is that we--the US Government--should put pressure as much as possible on Khomeini to resolve the hostage crisis. Criticism of Bani-Sadr, Ghotbzadeh, etc. is counterproductive. US censure of the militants essentially is what they want--it enhances their revolutionary credentials. The wording of the note should put the onus squarely on Khomeini.

A Suggestion

The US Government, the UN, and indeed other countries dealing with Iran have been operating under two basic assumptions:

- That during the revolutionary stage in Iran Ayatollah Khomeini is the supreme arbiter and decision-maker and;
- Ayatollah Khomeini desires to establish an Islamic Republic through popular plebiscites, the first steps of which were the approval of the constitution and the election of President Bani-Sadr.

On the basis of these assumptions we, and other nations, have attempted to resolve our problems with Iran and conduct normal relations.

We now must reassess these assumptions. It has become obvious that the militants at the US Embassy are making as great a claim to legitimacy as Ayatollah Khomeini or President Bani-Sadr. The militants ability to force Bani-Sadr to back down on his commitment to allow the UN commission to visit all of the hostages and to intimidate Khomeini to do their bidding by means of threats and demonstrations indicates that

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there are three competing circles of power in Iran. In this situation, it is virtually impossible to attempt meaningful or normal negotiations.

We are now attempting to clarify just what an Iranian commitment is, who is qualified to give it, and whether there exists a moral obligation under Islamic law to live up to that commitment. Ayatollah Khomeini cannot appeal for a review of Iran's grievances under the terms of internationally accepted principles of justice while flagrantly violating those principles by yielding to the demands of the militants holding the hostages.

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